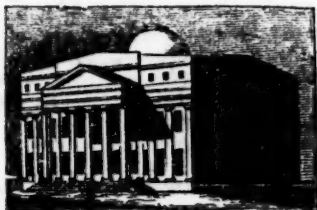


SCHOOL JOURNAL

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Official.

APPLICATION OF SCHOOL MONEY.

GEDDES, March 17, 1846.

Hon. N. S. Benton, Sup't. Common Schools:

DEAR SIR—The trustees of school district No. 5, in this town, have drawn an order on me for the sum of \$70, in favor of a teacher employed by them last year, (whose term expired in Oct. last, since that time they have employed another,) to be paid out of the teachers' money apportioned this year. Supposing it to be contrary to law to pay money out of the fund received and apportioned this year for the payment of teachers' wages which became due last October, I declined to accept it, and promised to write to you for your opinion in the matter.

Respectfully yours, &c.,

E. W. CURTIS,

Town Superintendent of Salina.

SECRETARY'S OFFICE.

DEPARTMENT OF COM. SCHOOLS, }
Albany, March 26, 1846.

SIR—I should have no difficulty in disposing of the question presented in your letter of the 17th instant, were I not brought in conflict with the recent decisions of this department under my immediate predecessor, which seem to have been founded upon the fact that there is no express provision of the statute prohibiting the application by the trustees of the moneys appropriated to the payment of teachers' wages to any indebtedness of this kind, without reference to the time when the indebtedness accrued. It seems to me this view of the subject does not accord with other provisions which should be carried into effect in order that the system may work harmoniously. The trustees are required to pay the wages of the teacher out of the moneys which may be apportioned to their district, applying a portion to each term or quarter during the year, not exceeding four, as may be directed by a vote of the district, and to collect the residue of such wages not paid by the proportion of the public money allotted to that purpose, from the persons sending children to school and liable therefor.

They are also required to exempt indigent persons within the district from the payment of teachers' wages for the current year, and when, by reason of the inability to collect any tax or rate bill there shall be a deficiency, a tax must be levied upon the district to supply that deficiency. Now all these provisions apply to the current year and not to a year past. Again, the moneys for the support of the schools are annually appropriated and raised, and must there not be found strong and controlling reasons for allowing the funds which are evidently intended to discharge accruing liabilities to be applied to past indebtedness? If the moneys apportioned for the year 1846 may legally be applied to the payment of teachers' wages incurred in 1845, I see no reason why the same rule would not sanction a payment of a demand which had accrued in the year 1844 or 1843 or any other anterior period. The fiscal year with the trustees closes on the 31st of December, which ends the calendar year; their reports cover all transactions and business officially performed by them during that period, and are supposed to embrace the moneys received and expended by them for the support of schools for the time mentioned therein. To allow the funds raised and apportioned to meet current charges to be applied otherwise, seems to me not in accordance with the spirit and true intent of the laws in relation to our common schools. It leads to embarrassments, encourages inattention to present necessities and duties, and postpones the payment of demands presently due, which should be promptly and satisfactorily met. Under such circumstances how are the trustees to ascertain the amounts to be levied by rate bills that are required to be made out, if they depend upon a contingent future appropriation which may never be realized? The rate bills for the balance of teachers' wages should in all cases be made out at the close of the term, summer and winter; the indigent persons exempted, and the district tax levied to pay the outstanding deficiencies of the previous term, if any is necessary; and how are the trustees to ascertain the proper facts to enable them to comply with the requisitions of law, if they depend altogether upon contingencies, as they must do, when they look to the fu-

ture and not to the means on hand to pay their accruing liabilities for teachers' wages?

The trustees are required to pay their wages out of the moneys received by the town superintendents and collect the residue by rate bills, &c. The sums apportioned to each district by these officers on the first Tuesday of April in each year, if applied to current charges, is known and certain, and if applied in equal portions to the winter and summer schools, the trustees will know the exact amount they may draw for in favor of a qualified teacher, and the balance to be raised by rate bills. These bills should, to prevent losses by removals from the district and other contingencies, be promptly collected and the teacher paid. As before remarked, I feel considerable embarrassment in disposing of this subject in accordance with my own views, owing to the previous action of the department on this point, feeling, as I do, the importance of having its decisions uniform as far as practicable; and I regret very much I cannot bring my own judgment, upon mature reflection, to the same conclusion. Believing, however, that it is contrary to the spirit and intent of the statutes, I feel constrained to say that in my opinion the funds appropriated to the support of the schools should be, in all cases, applied to the discharge of demands accruing from the winter and summer terms of the year in which they are received.

I will put one case to show how unjustly a different rule would operate: A school district in October or November receives an accession of families numbering eight or ten children within the ages of five and sixteen years, who are enumerated by the trustees, and form a part of the whole number upon which the town superintendent bases his apportionment to this same district, not only out of the moneys apportioned by the state, but of the moneys also levied upon the property of the same heads of families who have been added to the district. Would it comport with justice or equity to take the money apportioned on the first of April, subsequent to their annexation, and apply it to the payment of teachers' wages which had accrued before they belonged to the district, leaving the expenses of the school for the current year to be paid chiefly by rate bill, or carried over to another year, when the condition of the district may be again materially changed? It seems to me an effort should be made by the department and the officers entrusted with the administration of the laws relating to the schools, to confine the expenditures of the public moneys to the period of the year commencing with the winter term preceding, and closing with the summer term succeeding the date of apportionment. This allows those who have contributed to the fund an opportunity of participating in its benefits immediately, and in my opinion carries into effect the intention of the legislature more directly than any other mode suggested for consideration.

Very respectfully, your ob't. serv't.

N. S. BENTON,

Sup't. Com. Schools.

E. W. CURTIS, Esq.

VALUE OF TIME.—Every hour of time is worth at least a good thought, a good wish and a good endeavor.

State Normal School.

EXTRACTS

From the Report of the Executive Committee of the State Normal School.

Made to the Legislature January 26, 1846.

[Concluded.]

PLEDGE TO TEACH.

All the pupils on entering the school are required to sign the following declaration:

"We the subscribers hereby declare, that it is our intention to devote ourselves to the business of teaching district schools, and that our sole object in resorting to this Normal School is the better to prepare ourselves for that important duty."

The committee felt themselves imperatively bound to guard the trust committed to them from abuse. The design of the legislature was not to endow an institution, whither any or all might resort, who desired to obtain a solid education; the act expressly declares, that it was founded "for the instruction and practice of teachers of common schools in the science of education and in the art of teaching." The end of the law would therefore have been defeated, if the doors of the school had been thrown open to any who would enter. This consideration induced the committee to demand the above pledge, which they wished to make as stringent as possible. And it gives them pleasure to state, that they have not the shadow of a reason for doubting the honesty of the pupils who have signed it. It may also be stated here, that of the thirty-four graduates of the school, thirty-three are actually engaged in common schools, and one is fulfilling the duties of a county superintendent.

THE PROSPECTS OF THE SCHOOL.

The executive committee have thus detailed at length "the progress and condition" of the school; but this is only a *part* of the duty required of them by the provisions of the act for the establishment of the Normal School: for they are also enjoined to give "a detailed report" "of the prospects of the school."

Of course the legislature did not expect the committee to perform the prophet's functions, and to foretell the future. They are simply commanded, as men having the oversight and direction of the school, and who *ought* to be conversant with its details, to tell their honest opinion about it. The committee think they hear the voice of the legislature, speaking to them in the act of May 7th, 1844, and saying: Tell us honestly what is your opinion of the Normal School? Will it accomplish the proposed end? As far as they are able, the committee will answer these inquiries.

The end proposed in the establishment of the Normal School was, to educate teachers for our common schools; to send forth those, to take charge of the susceptible minds of the children of this commonwealth, who, together with high moral principle, should possess the requisite knowledge of the branches to be taught, and withal be "apt to teach." The school was designed to educate the moral qualities of the instructor—to impress him with the solemn responsibilities of his work—so that he might feel the blessedness of being patient, long suffering and

unwearied in his efforts for the good of his pupils. It was intended to teach its students, and by their precept and example to impress all, who aspired to the honor of instructing, that the work of teaching was so important, that no labor of preparation could be too great, since the good, that could be accomplished, was vast, beyond the powers of human conception. Hence a stimulus was to be imparted to the teacher, which should never be spent, but be continually operative, urging him to the acquisition of higher attainments in virtue, knowledge and aptness to teach. This, it is conceived, was the philanthropic end which the legislature of 1844 had in view, when they established the Normal School.

But it may be asked, "was not the establishment of this school unnecessary, since the teachers of the state were already fully competent for the discharge of their duties?" In reply, it may be asked, are the district teachers as a *body*, such men as the legislature hope to send forth from their Normal School? The annual reports of the superintendent of common schools give in answer a decided negative. While these reports speak of many of the teachers, in terms of high and deserved praise—declaring their entire competence as to virtue and knowledge, and their unwearied, self-denying toil for the good of the young—they also say, with a mournful truthfulness, that the number of really competent teachers constitutes but a small fraction of the whole class. They state, that there has been and is a gradual improvement in the condition of the district schools; but it is, alas, too apparent, from their urgent requests for farther legislation, that they regard the bettering process as far too slow, to meet the wants of the rising generation. Gov. De Witt Clinton used the following language in his executive message of 1819: "The most durable impressions are derived from the first stages of education; ignorant and vicious preceptors, and injudicious and ill-arranged systems of education must have a most pernicious influence upon the habits, manners, morals and mind of our youth, and vitiate their conduct through life." Similar language has been repeated ever since by governors, the educational committees of the legislature, and the superintendents of common schools, accompanied by the urgent request, that some plan should be devised for elevating the character of the teacher.

The legislature was not inattentive to these earnest prayers, and the incorporated academies of the state were looked to as capable, under certain modifications, of affording a remedy for the evil.

It was said by those who devised what, for convenience, may be called the *Academical plan*, that it "was more advantageous than to create separate seminaries for the instruction of teachers." But, as was predicted by many of the friends of education, little was effected by this plan. A distinguished gentleman writing upon this subject in 1839, remarked, that "the pursuits and objects of a common academical class are so different from those of a normal one, that it would seem to us, that the two can be far more successfully prosecuted separately than together." But experience taught even a stronger lesson, that the amalgamation of an academical and normal school was incompatible, and when united, that a normal school could only succeed,

in any degree, by defeating the ends for which academies were instituted.

It would appear, therefore, that the present Normal School owed its establishment to the *actual educational wants* of the state, and the hope was cherished that it would supply, to a considerable extent, a remedy for some of the existing evils.

But is there a reasonable prospect that the Normal School, as an educational scheme, will be more successful than the plans which have preceded it? To this it is answered, that if the school continue under the charge of teachers, every way so competent as the present instructors, and if fostered by the legislature, it cannot fail. And the committee feel justified in speaking strongly, from the success that has already crowned the effort. The minds of the pupils have been aroused, and they have labored with most commendable zeal in the acquisition of knowledge and of the best modes of imparting instruction. No one can enter the recitation rooms of the Normal School without feeling, that teachers and taught are *in earnest*, that here there is no child's play. Of nearly all the thirty-four graduates who have gone forth from the school, it may be affirmed, that their educational fabric is granite from the base to the top stone. And those who occupy the seats during the present term, are busily engaged in quarrying, polishing and laying the same solid material.

Nothing in the school makes so strong an impression upon the minds of visitors, as the display of a determined purpose on the part of the students, to get at the truth upon every subject of study. Implicit faith in the dicta of a teacher is not an article in the educational creed of the Normal School, and the instructors are doing their utmost that it may never become so. At recitation the pupil has the privilege of stating his difficulties and doubts, and even his objections, and the subject under consideration is not passed until it is thoroughly sifted. The committee watched with deep interest, and not without apprehension, this feature in the system of instruction of Messrs. Page and Perkins. At first they feared, lest the teachers might, sooner or later, be placed in an awkward dilemma, and be found wanting on some point; for nothing is truer, than that a person of ordinary capacity may ask a question, which a wiser man *ought*, and yet may *not* be able to answer. But the committee did not then know the teachers of the Normal School as well as they now do; and indeed all apprehension on this point was dispelled before the close of the first term. Before leaving this topic, it may, however, be well to remark, that the daily ordeal of questioning through which the instructors and their assistants pass, is one, to say the least, to which the executive committee would not like to be exposed. A distinguished officer in one of our colleges, upon his visit to the school, remarked that "it would not be safe to expose our college professors to such a trial," and he suggested that the privilege of questioning ought to be much curtailed, for there was danger of placing the teachers in an unpleasant position. But confidence has so completely supplanted fear in the minds of the committee, that the suggestion of the professor is not likely to be soon adopted.

The committee would therefore state their strong conviction that this gratifying state of interest and effort, as witnessed in the school, has been caused by the excellence of the normal system, efficiently carried out.

And if such has been the result of the first year, why may not each succeeding one witness the same or even greater results? In the first year of any enterprise, much time is necessarily spent in planning and arranging, but when the arrangements have been completed, and the whole time is devoted to the purpose proposed in the institution, greater results may be confidently expected, than could be in its incipient stages.

The committee can hardly hope, that they have escaped making mistakes in their plans and arrangements, still they do hope and believe, that if they have erred, their errors are fewer than is usual in the commencement of such an undertaking. Nor do they take to themselves any credit for this avoidance of mistakes, since they profited by the experience of those who had been engaged in the organization and management of similar institutions.

One arrangement of the school has perhaps occasioned more remarks as to its wisdom than all the rest—allusion is here made to the division of the students into two classes, called "State pupils" and "volunteers." But some such arrangement was unavoidable in the beginning of the school. The committee would have been blameworthy had they thrown open the doors, and said to all "come, we will support you." There was a limited amount of funds committed to them, and of course, they could not but fix a limit, beyond which pecuniary assistance must not be rendered. But it may be asked, why was it necessary to give pecuniary aid at all? It is replied, that without this aid, students could not have been induced to enter the school. Doubts were very extensively entertained as to the feasibility of the plan; some regarded it as a novelty doomed to fail, and others hinted that the legislature of 1845 would rescind the act passed by their predecessors. Strong inducements had therefore to be presented before the students would connect themselves with an institution, the permanence of which was so doubtful. But still the committee were aware, that their arrangements were sufficient for the education of a larger number, than they could assist in supporting: hence they resolved to admit others upon examination, who should only receive tuition and the use of text books free of expense.

But the circumstances, which rendered this arrangement imperative, no longer exist. The school has grown so much into favor with the community at large, and the kind purposes of the legislature have been so fully expressed, that it is believed the payment of a bonus to a portion of the students is no longer necessary. The distinction of "State pupils" and "volunteers" will consequently cease after the present term. The details of the new arrangement are not yet fully settled; but by fitting up an additional room, 256 pupils can be accommodated, which will be twice the number of the members of the assembly. If so large a number be admitted, they will all be classed as "State pupils," and

be selected from the counties according to the ratio of representation; and each will receive an allowance, a little more than sufficient to defray his travelling expenses to and from the school.

This arrangement, it is believed, will give the school increased favor with the community, as well as greatly augment its usefulness.

As to the influence which the school shall exert upon the standing of teachers, and the cause of education, the community must judge. The committee believe, however, that those who are thoroughly trained with reference to teaching, who have the methods of teaching and the means of exciting an interest in the young, must be more successful than those, who enter the schools without thought, and who, having nothing to guide them but a sort of extemporaneous impulse, are nearly as likely to go wrong as right.

It is believed, too, that the indirect influence of the school will be salutary. Wherever a normal pupil is employed to teach, there will be a large circle of other teachers incited to effort to be his equals, who otherwise might never have been roused to any extraordinary exertion. A few poor teachers, indeed, conscious of their own inferiority, will be moved to oppose the school and denounce the system of instruction, which they cannot hope to emulate; but the majority will desire improvement, and be glad to take the hints which they can gather from any good example around them. On this point the institutes which were held during the last autumn, may be cited as proof. In several of the counties, the graduates of the school officiated by request as teachers. So far as heard from, their reception was most gratifying. They not only did not excite any untoward jealousies, but gained largely upon the confidence and good will of the teachers assembled. This is shown by the resolutions passed by many of the institutes, a few of which will be presented.

The institute at Canandaigua, (160 members,) was mostly conducted by five normal pupils from that county. At the close the following resolution was passed:

"Resolved, That the state normal students, by the talent they have displayed, by the interest they have inspired, and by the instruction they have given during the session of the institute, have furnished a noble and praiseworthy commentary upon the utility of that institution, and conferred a lasting honor upon its principal."

In Auburn, Cayuga county, two of the normal pupils gave nearly all the instruction for two weeks to about 150 members. The following is their expression:

"Resolved, That Messrs. W. F. Phelps and Ch's. D. Lawrence, of the State Normal School, are entitled to our lasting gratitude and confidence for their efficient and arduous efforts as teachers of the institute."

At Oswego, an institute of 277 members was held. They thus express themselves:

"Resolved, That in the assistant teachers, Mr. Alexander M. Baker, and Miss Martha A. Nelson, pupils of the State Normal School, we have strikingly exhibited the benefits of that institution, in their appropriate and interesting manner of communicating instruction."

The committee have been led to quote these resolutions from their high regard for the opi-

nions of the county institutes—a regard which it is believed, is cherished by the community at large. Hence the expressions of the institutes, in favor of the Normal School, are looked upon by the committee as high authority, evincing the increase of public confidence in the normal system.

The committee would therefore conclude their report, by stating their strong conviction, that the normal system, in connection with the county institutes, more than any thing else, will tend to elevate the character of the district school teachers of the state, and to pour blessings upon the young.

It is with deep regret, that the committee communicate the death of Francis Dwight, Esq., an efficient member of the executive committee; his unwearied services as a friend of education sufficiently speak his praise, and the memory of this good man shall not perish.

Reports of County Superintendents.

ORANGE COUNTY.

Extract from the Report of HORACE K. STEWART, Esq., Co. Superintendent.

Hon. N. S. BENTON, Sup't. Com. Schools:

SIR—In connection with the papers submitted by me, in compliance with the requirements of the department, I would also respectfully present the following statement, relating to the condition of the schools in this county.

During the present year, I have had the pleasing gratification of witnessing a very decided improvement in the methods of teaching; in the organization, management and discipline of schools; and in the qualifications of teachers. I have found very few, compared with the number last year, teaching exclusively on the old mechanical system. Particular pains are taken to render lessons clear and comprehensive to the understanding of the pupils, by illustrations explanatory of their uses and practical application.

Notwithstanding a large number of teachers have justly acquired this character—good and useful teachers—still there are many, evincing a disposition to render themselves useful in their calling, that have not the moral courage to depart far from the old and beaten track of their predecessors; they fear reformation will be viewed only in the light of innovation, a subterfuge for the more laborious duties of the school room, and thereby incur the censure of employers; consequently they are stationary, and, as I may say, almost useless teachers.

Schools under the care of the former class are not wanting in systematic teaching. Instead of the learner being driven through mazes and intricacies, entangled and perplexed at every step, he is led by his teacher, who like a skillful pioneer removes every obstruction, solves and explains every mystery, and describes the beauties that present themselves along the path of knowledge and useful science. Whatever is instructive, whatever calls up and invigorates the powers of thought, reflection, or even the imagination, receives the attention that the importance of the subject deserves, and nothing is permitted to pass without affording aliment for the juvenile mind.

GOVERNMENT AND DISCIPLINE.

This subject, I am happy to state has, within a very few years, been so thoroughly canvassed, that upon the minds of teachers or employers little doubt is left as to the most effectual modes of securing these indispensable requisites of schools. I feel that I am safe in saying that schools may be governed without the terror of the rod; although I would not prohibit entirely the right to inflict corporal punishment in extreme cases, nor discountenance a resort to this when all and every other means had failed. In many of our schools the rod is not used or even seen; in others it is retained as a restraint upon the refractory and incorrigible. One teacher showed me a rod about sixteen inches in length, which had been in his school three or four years,

and he had occasion to use it but once during the past year. Another informed me that "the little rattan he used for pointing" was the only instrument of "terror or torture" he had had for more than four years. These were large schools, and I am free to say an excellent specimen of order and discipline. In scenes like these, how delightfully does the *law of love* contrast with the *law of terror and arbitrary sway*; the former is recognized and felt by all; readily finds way to the finer feelings of children, and is reflected and responded to by smiling countenances and happy hearts, beating high with hope and promise: the latter finds no place in the tender throbbings of the young heart; but it begets sullenness and gloom—fear is depicted upon every countenance and a sickening sadness upon every brow. But two schools, however, have I visited this year, presenting such a picture of wretchedness and maladministration. In each of these I found rods five or six feet in length, the insignia of authority as well as torture, carried about the house by the teacher, who every now and then brandished it with coachmanlike dexterity, to overawe his charge and to secure that order which he must strive in vain to secure by such measures and such means.

SMALL DISTRICTS.

Upon this subject I would dwell at some length, for I look upon small districts as one of the greatest evils to be overcome—an evil that stands in the way of progressive improvement, forming one of the strongest barriers to the onward and upward march of elementary education; an evil, the source and fountain of innumerable others that cannot be fully eradicated until this most fruitful one is effectually corrected and banished beyond the reach of complaint. In this county by far too many districts are too small to employ able and efficient teachers, or even teachers of ordinary abilities and qualifications; the means for educational purposes are circumscribed and limited; and too often the liberality of those whose means are ample, partakes of the like contracted dimensions.

Among the many evils existing in small districts, and not the least in large ones, is a disposition manifested by some to control its affairs regardless of the interests or wishes of others—to coerce measures that require cool and deliberate action—and to censure every measure that is not squared according to their own notions of order and propriety. If the officers of the dis-

trict are not in all respects to their liking, or of their own selecting, they feel at liberty to scrutinize with reprehensible severity, all their doings; to sow the seeds of discord and dissension, and render, regardless of consequences, the school and all that pertains thereto, a scene of confusion, if not of bitterness and acrimony. If parents and guardians of youth would view this subject in its proper light—if they would seek to remedy this evil by uniting two or more districts in one, thus concentrating their now divided means to support a school, we might fondly anticipate the day, not far distant, when the dark, portentous gloom that envelops these feeble nurseries of youth would be dispelled by the radiations of the sun of science casting its healthful and invigorating influence around.

Such evils should be promptly removed—such evils must be corrected before these schools can give evidence of any material improvement, or before the public can expect, with any degree of certainty, any beneficial results from the efforts of those who labor for their advancement.

As a corrective, I have advised and urgently insisted upon the advantages of uniting and consolidating two or more of these barren and almost useless districts into one, that they may become in fact what they are only in prospective. But this proposition has as frequently been met with the objection that it would form too large a school—that no teacher could do justice to so large a number—thirty scholars being as many as one teacher can properly attend to; besides it would cost something to build a new house. To this fallacious objection I would say that experience has proved the reverse of this. Within a few years several small districts in various parts of the county have been united with beneficial results. The members of these, like the members of almost all small districts, became disheartened and discouraged—they saw their schools in their true character, miserable, useless and expensive institutions. They saw the only remedy was consolidation; a consolidation and concentration of their hitherto divided means of support, which now enables them to employ able and efficient teachers, who have radically and thoroughly transformed these hitherto unpromising and badly educated sections, and placed them upon a level, at least, with the most intellectual, enlightened and intelligent of any portion of the county. Should the inhabitants of other small and feeble districts adopt and pursue a similar course, like results would follow; and the ultimate result would be, that instead of meagre and inefficient schools, and badly qualified teachers, detrimental to the cause of education, these schools would soon be elevated to a standard commensurate with their object.

DISTRICT LIBRARIES.

These valuable institutions, in most sections of the county, receive commendable attention, and are regarded by the young as means of mental culture, affording intellectual entertainments that are sought for in vain among the more common but less beneficial enjoyments of youth: the elder portion of community, except the more intelligent, do not appreciate this noble provision, as the importance of this praise-worthy measure deserves. This unquestionably is owing to an

egregious defect of early education. A taste for reading and improving the mind will be cultivated by all who at the proper age have opportunities to do so. By proper care and attention on the part of teachers and parents encouraging children and youth to avail themselves of the advantages and means within their reach and at their command, no section of the state but may become highly intelligent and intellectual through the aid of the district libraries.

However valuable and useful these institutions are; however full of promise they are to the rising generation; however amply they supply them with the bread of knowledge, still there are some among us, that with barefaced effrontery—while unmasked ignorance sits undisturbed upon their brow—denounce them as public nuisances, worthy only the power that gave them being. It cannot be doubted that in many instances, injudicious and unwise selections of books, made with the best of motives, but under a false conception of their character and worth, or what would be most acceptable to the public, has to some extent biased the minds of many against the district library: but of late better selections than formerly have been made; standard works and works of merit are more sought for and purchased than any other—these works are constantly in circulation, while the old ones are but little read.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS VISITED.

During the year I have visited one hundred and sixty-nine schools once; one hundred and three twice; fifty-seven three times and nine four times, making in all three hundred and thirty-eight. I have labored to render the visits interesting to the pupils and useful to teachers; communicating such information relative to the various modes of teaching as experience and observation suggested. In all the towns but one, I was accompanied by the town superintendent, who generally shared liberally in the labors and duties to be discharged. From those gentlemen I received much assistance and many valuable suggestions relative to the improvement of schools; and here I would state, that to me it is a source of pleasure to be able to bear testimony to the able and efficient manner in which these officers discharged the duties committed to them.

A very great evil existing in our schools is the want of a uniform standard of text books. In a large majority of them it is not uncommon to find two, three, or sometimes four different kinds of text books upon one subject. This state of things, it must be obvious to every person in the least degree familiar with the business of teaching, greatly hinders the progress of improvement. By means of such injudicious arrangements—if arrangements they may be called—the school must necessarily be divided into a great number of classes; the time and attention of the teacher divided and interrupted so as to render it impossible for him to make the necessary explanations, observations and remarks indispensable to a full and clear understanding of the various branches taught in the school. I have endeavored to point out the consequences of this evil; and have insisted upon a uniformity, if not in each town, at least in each school. The great multiplicity of school books by different authors, has a tendency to continue this evil,

until some measure more effectual than the caprice of patrons or the preference of teachers, shall be devised to correct this embarrassment.

In conformity with the provision for teachers to obtain certificates of the highest grade, I would respectfully recommend to your notice the following persons, as fully entitled to a rank and place among the best teachers of our country, and every way worthy of state certificates, viz.: Orville M. Smith, of Newburgh; Miss Temperance J. Havens, do.; Cornelius C. Sullivan, do.; Charles B. Halstead, Chester; Thomas G. Pier-son, Minisink.

SCHOOL REFORM.

This wild and ridiculous project, like others of its kind, has had its rise and its fall. Though ephemeral in duration, it is much to be regretted that its baleful influence and withering effects are perceptible in many of our schools. During the threatening and blustering attitude it assumed, and the pomp it displayed, no serious apprehensions need have been entertained of its final success. The object was too perceptible to deceive. It had its origin in *sectarian bigotry* and "*mushroom popularity*." The leaders of this heartless scheme—energetic and persevering as they are, and possessing, as they do, sufficient address to alarm the ignorant and arouse the designing—are men in whom the honest, the well informed and deserving yeomanry of Orange county have no confidence. * * *

In conclusion, I would tender my thanks to the friends of education in various sections of the county, for their kindness and hospitality.

Respectfully, yours, &c.

HORACE K. STEWART, *Co. Sup't.*

Literature and Science.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF ANIMALS.

Our attention has lately been attracted to this subject by a learned article in the Edinburgh Review, in which the writer shows that he has considered these things deeply, although he has failed to account for them. We have supposed that some extracts from this article may be interesting to our readers. They will embody in a short space the principal difficulties which science has had to encounter,—as yet unsuccessfully,—in explaining the distribution of animals over the surface of the earth:

"How does it happen that the tiger has never travelled beyond the continent and islands of Asia, while the sloth has reached South America, and the ornithorhynchus, New Holland? Why are the pampas (plains) of the new world inhabited by quadrupeds entirely different from the species which occur in the plains of Tartary and the karoo of Africa? Did the mountains of Armenia offer no proper resting places to the llamas which now dwell among the passes of the Andes? Were the peaks of Ararat unfit for the condor of Peru, or the shores of the Caspian sea for the great Washingtonian eagle, which has been found only in the United States? In what manner did the mole contrive to travel underground to the last named territories; and how

did it manage to support itself while journeying to the southern states, when we know that there are no earth worms (its accustomed food) in the vicinity of the Arctic circle, near which it must have passed, according to Pennant's theory of the progression of species, while advancing from the northeast coast of Asia to the northwest corner of the new world.

"To whatever country the observant traveller turns his steps, he finds it characterized by various peculiar tribes; and many of these, the farthest removed from what we consider as the central station in which all living creatures were originally placed, are the most imperfectly provided with the means of locomotion. Many species appear, as it were, to be voluntarily imprisoned,—at least the causes of their circumscription have hitherto evaded our researches; while the locomotion of others is more apparently dependent on the physical circumstances by which they are surrounded.

"The fleet and fiery onager (wild ass) 'whose home I have made the wilderness, and the barren lands his dwelling,' knows not how to pass beyond certain determinate, though to us invisible boundaries, within which he is doomed to dwell in spite of his never tiring strength, and long endurance of hunger and thirst. For thousands of years before the birth of Columbus, the llamas of the new world had tracked the mountain passes of the Andes, and gazed, with their dusky masters, at once on the Atlantic ocean and the far Pacific, across neither of which the audacious genius of man had as yet aspired to venture. For countless generations has the polar bear

'With dangling ice all horrid, stark'd in iron,'

along the frost-bound shores of Greenland, and would now he sought for in vain, under a less inclement sky. The tiger, with his fevered blood, and all subduing strength, lurks like a pestilence among the most beautiful of the Asiatic islands, or glares, with cruel and unsated eye, from the jungle grass of India. The cunning panther crouches among the branches of the African forests, or with noiseless footsteps winds his insidious way through the sylvan colonnade of over-arching groves, presenting a striking contrast, in the silent celerity of his movements, to the restless clamor of the wily monkeys—the mimic men—whose fantastic tricks he so often seeks in vain to imitate. His congenner of the new world, the fiercer and more powerful jaguar, prowls along the shores of the Orinoco, or, reclined beneath a magnificent palm tree, forms a picture such as that which so often delighted the eyes of Humboldt and his brave companion. The wary moose deer of the northern continent, roaming amid the gloom of primeval forests, reposing during the sultry noon tide with his magnificent antlers beneath the refreshing shade of a gigantic tulip tree, or, starting at the far cry of wolves or other wild animals, alike unknown in kind to any other region of the earth, he plunges for safety across some sea like river, threatening with 'armed front' the up raised jaws of a huge and fire eyed reptile, reposing on its sunny banks. The sandy and desert plains of Africa alone produce of birds and quadrupeds the tallest of their kinds—the swift ostrich, and the gentle cameloopard, neither of which are known elsewhere.

"A glance at the innumerable and far spread legions which compose the busy world of insect life, renders the subject still more complex and confounding. A discovery ship, under the guidance of brave men, surmounts with difficulty the terrors of the ocean, and after being months on the trackless main, some thousand miles from any of the great continents of the earth, she arrives at last, and accidentally, at some hitherto unknown island of small dimensions, a mere speck in the vast world of waters by which it is surrounded. She probably finds the 'Lord of the Creation' there unknown; but though untrod by human footsteps, how busy is that lonely spot with all the other forms of active life! Even man himself is represented, not unaptly, by the sagacious and imitative monkeys which eagerly employ so many vain expedients to drive from their shores what they no doubt regard as merely a stronger species of their race. Birds of gayest plume stand fearlessly before the unsympathizing naturalist, and at every step of the botanical collector, the most gorgeous butterflies are wafted from the blossoms of unknown flowers, and beautify the living air with their many splendid hues. Yet how frail are such gaudy wings, and how vainly would they now serve as the means of transport from that solitary spot, where all the present generations have had their birth! In what manner, then, did they become its denizens, or by what means were they transported to a point almost imperceptible, in comparison with the immeasurable extent of the circumjacent ocean?

"An ingenious French writer, M. de St. Vincent, selects as an illustration of his sentiments on this subject, Mascareigne, or the isle of Bourbon, situated four hundred and fifty miles from the nearest point of Madagascar, from which it might, on a casual survey, be supposed to have derived its plants and animals. This remarkable island does not contain a particle of earth or stone, which has not been originally submitted to the violent action of submarine volcanic fire. All its characters indicate a much more recent origin than that of the ancient continent. It bears about it an aspect of youth and novelty which recalls what the poets have felt or feigned, of a nascent world, and which is only observable in certain other islands, also admitted among the formation of later ages. Repeated eruptions, heaping up bed upon bed of burning lava, formed at last a mountain, or rocky island, which the shocks of earthquakes rent in pieces, and on the heated surface of which the rains of heaven, speedily transformed into vapor, watered not

"the flowery lap
Of some irriguous valley,"
nor shed their refreshing influence over any possible form of vegetation. The fabled salamander alone might have become a denizen of that lurid rock,

"Dark, sultry, dead, unmeasured; without herb,
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life."

Now, by what means did a rich and beautiful verdure at last adorn it, and how have certain animals chosen for their peculiar abode, an insulated spot, rendered by the nature of its origin, uninhabitable for a long period after its first appearance and during its progressive formation and increase?

"It appears inadmissible to suppose that all or any of these organized beings have been transported from the more ancient continents to the insulated positions which they now inhabit, either by the power of winds, the prevalence of currents, the agency of birds, or the influence of the human race. When, and by what means, then, may it be asked, were they there conveyed? This is the problem which many thoughtful inquirers have long sought, and probably will forever seek, in vain, to solve. 'It is indeed true,' observes that enlightened naturalist, Baron Humboldt, 'that the migration and distribution of organized bodies, can no more be solved, as a problem in physical science, than the mystery of the original creation; and that the task of the philosopher is fulfilled, when he has indicated the laws, in accordance with which nature has distributed the forms of animal and vegetable life.'"

District School Journal.

S. S. RANDALL, Editor.

ALBANY, MAY, 1846.

OUR COMMON SCHOOLS.

We are, we think, fully justified in asserting that at no period in our history as a state, have our common schools, collectively considered, been in a more flourishing condition, than at the present time. The various influences which have been brought to bear upon them, during the past five or ten years, and which are now widely and extensively felt, have resulted in a vastly improved system of intellectual and moral culture—a higher and more enlightened and devoted class of teachers—and a deeper and more profound interest on the part of parents and the community generally. It is impossible for a dispassionate observer, acquainted with the state of things which existed in these respects but a few years since, to witness the daily exercises of any of these institutions, of the average grade of excellence, throughout the state, without being forcibly struck with the contrast which is exhibited when a comparison is instituted between the present and the past. The district school is no longer the repulsive, dreary and tedious place of mental and bodily torture, which has furnished the fertile theme of wit and sarcasm, to so many of the highest class of minds. Music and innocent hilarity; play grounds adorned with the choicest flowers and cultivated with the most assiduous care; walls ornamented with the most tasteful and attractive drawings, and seats and desks arranged with the utmost regard for the comfort and convenience of the occupant; kind, attentive and faithful teachers, and cheerful, obedient and happy pupils—now meet the eye on every hand: and the work of educa-

tion is every where progressing with a power and a success hitherto unknown. We advert to these things because we rejoice in their manifestation and prevalence, and because we desire to direct public attention more and more into this channel. Let the labors of the faithful and intelligent teacher be cheered by this indication of a more general appreciation of his arduous duties and responsibilities, and the time is not distant when every child in the land shall be surrounded, at every step of his advancing progress from the innocence and purity of infancy to maturity and manhood, by those ennobling and invigorating influences which can alone rightly develop and direct his mental and moral growth.

REPORTS OF COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS.

Finding it wholly impracticable to publish any considerable number of these valuable and truly interesting documents, without entirely giving up our columns to this object, we have handed over to our esteemed coadjutor, Mr. COOPER, of the Teachers' Advocate, the greater portion of them for publication in his valuable paper, which being issued weekly and having, as we rejoice to learn, a wide circulation, especially among teachers, will be enabled to lay them before the friends of education much more speedily and more efficiently than is in our power. We shall, however, publish such of them as we are able to find room for, from time to time, during the year. In our next we shall commence the publication of the Washington county reports.

The very valuable official and other communications which will be found in our columns, for the present month, have excluded several miscellaneous articles which we had marked for insertion, and for which we shall endeavor to find a place in our next.

CONVENTION OF COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS.

This convention will be held, in accordance with previous notice, at the Capitol in the city of Albany, on TUESDAY, the 12th DAY of MAY, at 10 o'clock, A. M.

The friends of popular education generally, throughout the state, are earnestly requested to attend. It is expected that the Hon. N. S. BENTON, Superintendent of Common Schools of this State; Hon. HORACE MANN, Secretary of the Board of Education of Massachusetts; HENRY BARNARD, Esq., Com. of Public Schools of Rhode Island; IRA MAYHEW, Esq., Sup't. of Public Instruction of Michigan; Dr. THEODORE F. KING, Sup't. of Public Schools of N.

Jersey, and the Hon. HORACE EATON, Sup't. of Com. Schools of Vermont, together with several other distinguished statesmen and educationists will be present during the sittings of the convention. The subjects for discussion, embracing the entire range of public instruction, the comparative advantages of the free school system, &c., will be presented in the form of resolutions by the members, in accordance with the plan adopted last year: and it is hoped therefore that each member of the convention will be prepared with such resolutions as he may desire to have discussed.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

We have several communications on hand for which we must bespeak the patient indulgence of our correspondents. It would afford us great pleasure to be able to find room for the animated and interesting descriptions of the progress of the schools in particular localities—their improvements—and especially the celebrations with which the periodical vacations are ushered in. But the crowded state of our columns, and the demand upon them from various sources of general interest, render this, at present, impossible; and the utmost in our power in such cases, is to give brief sketches of the substance of the information thus transmitted.

HERKIMER COUNTY.

We are assured by the superintendent of this county, STEPHEN TURTELLOT, Esq., that the schools under his supervision are rapidly improving; and that interesting celebrations have been recently held in Frankfortville, Danube and Winfield, at which large audiences, both of parents and children, were present. The people are every where waking up to the importance of a right education of the young.

NEW-JERSEY.

We have received the able report of the efficient superintendent of public schools of this state, Dr. THEODORE F. KING, (formerly county superintendent of Kings county,) and shall give liberal extracts from it in our next. In the mean time, we congratulate the friends of education on the accession of New-Jersey to the list of states actively engaged in the promotion of an enlightened system of public instruction. Her soil is rich in native vigor and needs only prudent and careful cultivation, under the auspices of such men as Dr. KING and his colleagues in the legislative and executive councils, to develop an ample and abundant harvest.

MICHIGAN.

The annual report of IRA MAYHEW, Esq. Superintendent of Public Instruction, (formerly county superintendent of Jefferson county in this state,) is before us, and exhibits a decided improvement in the condition of the common schools of this enterprising state. We shall endeavor to find room for extracts from this valuable and interesting document, at an early day.

VERMONT.

We, too, in conjunction with our honored contemporary of the Massachusetts Com. School Journal, "welcome our sister state of Vermont" to the broad and noble field of common school education. With a system substantially like our own, an able and experienced educationist at its head, sustained by an efficient corps of county superintendents, and an array of ambitious and enlightened teachers, Vermont will rapidly press closely on the heels of Massachusetts and New-York. HORACE EATON, Esq., the state superintendent, has commenced his labors by addressing a vigorous and practical circular to the several county superintendents in reference to the duties of their station, and a well timed and well written address to teachers of common schools generally. Measures are in active progress throughout the state, as we learn, for the formation of teachers' institutes; and several of the most advanced academies are co-operating with a laudable zeal in the prosecution of this great work of providing competent teachers of youth. The governor, the legislature and the people are united, nearly as one man, in this noble enterprise; and success, under such circumstances, cannot fail to reward their efforts.

Superintendent's Decisions.**VISITATION OF SCHOOLS.**

Each school should be visited by the town superintendent, officially, *once*, and not oftener, during the term, in addition to any visitations made in conjunction with the county superintendent: and half a day only need be devoted to the school of each district. Charges for official visitations beyond the limits herein prescribed, ought not in any case to be allowed.

APPENDAGES TO SCHOOL HOUSES.

Taxes may legally be voted by the inhabitants of school districts for enclosing the school lot with a good and substantial fence; for painting the house and fence; for digging a well and furnishing it with all the necessary requisites for use; and for providing a suitable book case for the library.

PAYMENT OF TEACHERS' WAGES.

It is the duty of the trustees of school districts, at the expiration of each term, to make out their rate bill for the wages of the teacher; and to draw an order upon the town superintendent in favor of the teacher, for the share of public money applicable, by vote of the district, or otherwise, to the term, accompanied by a certificate that such teacher was duly employed by them, legally qualified, and *entitled to the portion of public money so drawn for*, under the contract made with him.

It has been represented to the department, that it is the practice in many districts, for the trustees to draw an order on the town superintendent for the *whole amount of teachers' money apportioned to the district, whether applicable to the term or not*, and to apply it on the rate bill for the *winter school*—refunding the excess so applied from the avails of the *summer term*. This is wholly illegal and unjustifiable; a palpable perversion of the duties and powers of the trustees and a fraud upon the town superintendent; and no rate bill made out in such a way can legally be enforced.

Notices, &c.

AMERICAN QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF AGRICULTURE AND SCIENCE; conducted by Dr. E. EMMONS and A. OSBORN, Esq.: Albany, J. Munsell.

We have received the first No. of the third volume of this ably conducted and interesting work; and we cheerfully commend it to the public patronage and regard. It is replete with valuable information in the various departments of science and practical agriculture; and in conjunction with the CULTIVATOR and AMERICAN AGRICULTURIST, should find a place in every district library.

The present No. contains a very finely executed and accurate portrait of Gov. WRIGHT; and its execution is, in all respects, creditable to the enterprising publisher. Terms, \$2 per annum, in advance. The second No. we are informed is nearly ready for delivery.

THE MECHANICS' MIRROR. Devoted to the interests of Mechanics and Mutual Protection. ROBERT MACFARLANE, editor: Albany, John Tanner.

This is a monthly periodical, embracing within its range every thing of interest to the mechanic: and from the specimens before us, including the first four numbers, we are inclined to rank it among the standard publications of the day. It is published at \$1 per annum—neatly printed and well conducted.

Communications.

DUTIES OF TEACHERS.

BY C. HOLLEY.

All that has hitherto been done for common schools is far less than their importance and necessities demand, as essential to ordinary success and efficiency.

If we examine the school buildings, we shall find many of them badly located, poorly constructed, and miserably furnished. By farther investigation we may learn, that of the 736,045 children who were taught in the district schools of this state, during the year 1844, only 4,298 attended school twelve months, 216,380 attended *less than two months*, and not *one half attended six months*. By such investigation we shall be led to notice, also, the frequent change of teachers, the diversity and incorrectness of text books, the indifference of parents, and the apathy, not to say, opposition of those interested in sustaining academies and private schools.

In view of these and other discouragements, some exclaim, "What can we do? If you will arouse public attention; give children a taste for solid and useful learning; bring from other institutions our more advanced scholars who were the leaders of our classes, and apply the large amount of public and private funds, and the educational talent now appropriated to seminaries, academies and select schools, then we can go forward. Our teachers will be better qualified and compensated, more respectable and contented, and the district schools will soon become all that we desire."

Persons entertaining such sentiments evidently mistake results for means. Shall we suspend or diminish our efforts until these means or results are obtained? Certainly not. And have teachers nothing to do unless they can have all they ask for? We believe they have much to do. We believe, also, that they may accomplish an incalculable amount of good and secure for themselves an ample and imperishable reward by a proper use of the means now in hand or within their reach.

Now, in answer to the question, how shall district school teachers render their schools efficient, complete, and worthy of universal approbation; we say, let them possess the requisite qualifications for teaching, and adopt and practice the following "Resolutions of a Teacher."

"I engage in the profession of a teacher of youth, because it is one which affords a greater opportunity for contributing to the happiness of my fellow beings, and the prosperity of religion, than I would have, with my present qualifications, in any other situation of life: and with this view, I willingly sacrifice every personal gratification which might be derived from other sources, inconsistent with the faithful discharge of my scholastic duties, submit to the arduous and never ceasing labors attached to the profession, and give my whole self to the business; and pursue it with pleasure, zeal, energy and effect."

The object of education and of all the discipline and instruction of the school, should be to bring all the powers and faculties of our nature to the highest perfection of which they are capable; to fit the scholars to perform justly, skill-

fully and magnanimously the duties of every station in life, both public and private; to secure to them the greatest possible happiness, taking in the whole of life; to elevate their minds from the degradation of sin, to the love, worship and favor of God; and to qualify them for the eternal enjoyments of heaven.

The qualifications in a teacher, necessary for the successful performance of this important work, are: 1. A strong constitution, a sound mind, health and common sense. 2. That real, practical religion, which is interwoven with the feelings, and produces a moral and holy life. 3. A love of his profession and of children. 4. A thorough acquaintance with all the branches of knowledge he attempts to teach, and the most simple and best method of imparting that knowledge to others. 5. Resources of his own mind sufficient to enable him to act without the advice of others. 6. A capability of teaching in a manner adapted to the capacity of young minds, to arrest the attention of those whom he teaches; and of instantly answering every inquiry of the scholars, made about their studies. 7. Patience, presence of mind, experience, discretion, firmness to his purpose; a cool, deliberate, dispassionate, discriminating and correct judgment; an easy, unaffected address; a man of taste; of systematic, energetic action; of persevering industry, promptitude of thought, activity, vigilance, regularity and order in all his affairs. 8. An inflexible adherence to truth, and every promise, how trivial soever, he makes. His word once passed should never be broken. 9. Complete self-possession and self-government, and a faculty of instantly distinguishing propriety of conduct and of assuming and maintaining an unruffled state of mind and composure of countenance, amidst every irritating or laughable occurrence. 10. Neatness and cleanliness of dress; a perfect gentleman; a native ease, sobriety and dignity of manner in his whole deportment, which would secure the affection and respect of the children. 11. A competent knowledge of the powers and faculties of the human mind, and of human nature as it is practically exhibited in the world, to enable him to distinguish accurately between those little grades of difference, which exist in the minds of children, arising from habit, prejudice, natural disposition or education. 12. A deep, conscientious concern for the improvement of his scholars; a constant and continued sense of his accountability to that Being in whose presence he acts; and a desire to discharge every duty in such a manner as shall be acceptable to Him.

A teacher should never undertake the business of the school without previous daily preparation, by a full and consistent consideration of the duties to be performed, and private prayer to Almighty God for direction, aid, and a blessing.

His conduct should be such as to inspire the confidence of children. He should do nothing which would have a tendency to lessen his authority over children; but act and speak candidly, with dignity and effect. He must be accessible to the children. There is such a thing as mingling prudently in the amusements of children, without destroying one's authority over them.

He should consider that he is dealing with children, before whom no word or action of his is in vain—that every act, whether good or bad, has an important influence on the future character of the child; and that they are liable to have their character vitiated by improper acts, or a connivance at vices which may be exhibited before them. The more a teacher is loved, the more will his actions be imitated. He should esteem worth in every situation; and in all his intercourse with children of different ranks and degrees of education, show the same mildness and attention to the poor as to the wealthy; never speak to them in a high tone of arrogant authority, nor wantonly trifle with their passions, nor exercise their patience by keeping them waiting for his pleasure, nor make their personal defects, or their ignorance, which is less their fault than their parents', the subject of ridicule by himself or the scholars.

Indolence in a teacher is a chief cause of indolence in scholars. The attention and energy of the teacher secures the attention of the scholars. They are much influenced by sympathy.

If you inquire what more can be done for the improvement of common schools, we reply, let teachers persevere in the use of the means for exciting and sustaining a proper interest in schools. Allow us to mention some of the measures which we would recommend:

1. Visiting the people and conversing with them in a candid and rational way; with a manner calculated to convince all of the serious importance of mutual effort and co-operation in the great work of education.

2. Visiting neighboring schools. This will enable teachers to enforce one another's precepts, and each visit will afford opportunity for reciprocal instruction and encouragement.

3. The perusal and distribution of educational books and papers.

4. Teachers' meetings.

5. Hold monthly meetings with the trustees. Consult them. Treat them uniformly with confidence and respect, and obtain their hearty co-operation. At each meeting, present a monthly report in relation to the number of pupils in school, their progress, the condition of the school room and its furniture, and what apparatus or books are wanted.

At this time the teacher might profitably exhibit some interesting experiment, or some of his pupil's exercises in composition, penmanship, map-drawing, &c. Pupils would delight in contributing for such meetings; and the teacher should be prepared to read an essay if there is time. These meetings should not be lengthy and tedious.

Such meetings would doubtless result in the mutual advantage of both teachers and trustees. At least, the latter would find some persons willing to appreciate their efforts. It is well known, that school trustees perform their duties gratuitously, with much fidelity, and at considerable expense. Yet, who thanks them? How many blame and how few commend them. We would suggest that teachers and the community at large should attach so much responsibility, honor and importance to the office, that able and influential men would no longer avoid it, or accept because they must do so or pay a fine.

6. Gather and place in the school room collections of specimens in botany and mineralogy; also, of the insects, small birds and animals that may be found in your district.

Teach the children to observe objects around them, and exert yourself to make the school house a happy place; so delightful that your pupils will not loathe it in after years.

7. Regard the sports of the children. See that your pupils are amused, and that kindness, virtue, honesty and cheerfulness characterize the plays at school.

8. Never be discouraged at the greatness of your work. Assume the burden, look upward and go forward. If your reward is not great in this world, it will be glorious in a higher and better.

State Normal School.

"THE DISTRICT SCHOOLS AS THEY WERE,"
"County Superintendents"—Honor to
whom Honor."

Mr. S. S. RANDALL:

Dear Sir—I rejoice in the assurance, that the Journal is to be open to a full and free discussion of all subjects pertaining to the great and blessed cause of education; and that teachers, who have been "defamed and benighted long enough," (*aye, and quite too long,*) may be heard, not only in defence of their own character and profession, but, are to be permitted to speak their own sentiments, although they may differ from their "official superiors." That there has been extreme sensitiveness on the part of many reformers, including some county superintendents, whenever the infallibility of their theories, or the wisdom of their measures were called in question, is too obvious to admit of a denial. Whenever a man, or class of men, are unwilling to hear any argument against their favorite theories, it may be considered *prima facie* evidence of *conscious wrong*; and it is a just conclusion, that such are not *honest seekers* after truth; for truth loses nothing in a contest with error, but, often appears the more beautiful after a severe struggle, by being purified from the alloy with which it is commonly compounded. All it asks is "a clear field and a fair fight." But I need not say anything by way of apology for this article: I will only add that, from many years personal acquaintance with you, Mr. Editor, I think I may confidently say to my brother teachers, although they may entertain sentiments different from your own, and many of your distinguished correspondents, they will be allowed to express them through the columns of the Journal, and that in you, sir, the teachers will find a firm friend, and an honorable opponent on points where we may chance to differ.

Education is a favorite theme with all classes, parties, sects and creeds. Hence, for all such, as, for lack of ability, philanthropy, honesty, or for some cause, have failed to become *great* in anything else, it makes a most admirable hobby—"all saddled and bridled"—on which the ambitious may ride into popularity, and, by arrogating to themselves the title of "Reformers," they expect to reach the very pinnacle of fame, although they may, perhaps, "possess every qualification of unfitness." It seems to be a

cardinal principle with these "reformers," that nothing in educational matters, before they espoused the cause, *was ever done right*. Every thing previously done, must be condemned. They have made the wonderful discovery, and would have us believe, that the world has always been enveloped in the most profound darkness,—"darkness that might be felt"! To plain, *working* men, who look at things through a *common sense* medium, it is amusing to see these pseudo-"reformers," just awaking from their Rip Van Winkle nap, and shouting most lustily—"darkness"—"darkness"—"ignorance"—"IGNORANCE"! and pretending that a sudden flood of light has burst upon the world, and that they are the favored ones, who are to be the (self-selected) enlighteners of its benighted inhabitants: or, perhaps I should rather say, it would excite nothing but mirth, were it not for the evil tendency of their doctrines. But, unfortunately, these wise-acres, being the most prominent, blustering, noisy persons in the community, and finding a public press almost universally open to them, have harped upon their favorite dogmas and cant phrases, until many honest, well meaning people have been induced to believe, that every thing "*old*" and *time-honored* is worthless, and every thing *new*, (with, or *without merit*,) must be adopted, simply, *because it is new*.

Now, sir, as a professional teacher, [of a district school,] in self defence, and in behalf of my brother teachers, I beg leave to enter my solemn protest against such illiberal sentiments as I have alluded to. And in doing this, I shall make some strictures on an article published in the January number of the Journal, headed "*County Superintendents*," and signed "J. R." I do this, not because there is anything *new* in it, but, because it contains substantially the same stale heresies and slanders upon the schools and teachers as they "*were*," as have been promulgated by self-styled reformers for "*one-third of a century*" at least, although not all couched in precisely the same language; and because it is the most recent edition that has come to my notice. I have, therefore, no controversy with "J. R.," nor with any other *person*. I know not whether he be a county superintendent, or, indeed, whether he hails from this, or some other state. My target is *error*, from whomsoever it may come; and I trust this will be deemed sufficient to exonerate me from any charge of personalities.

"J. R." is more candid and honest than many others, and seems to have some faint idea of the right, and *almost* makes an approximation to giving teachers their due: and he would, no doubt, have rendered them full justice, had not the "*inherent light*" of the county superintendents been so dazzling, as to obscure the "*reflected light*" of the schools and teachers. The following quotation from the concluding paragraph, shows candor and honesty.

"I am glad, indeed," says he, "that the character of this profession, [the teacher's,] is rising, and that any intelligent part of the community is beginning to regard the teachers as something more than cyphers. They have been defamed and be-nothinged long enough. The world owes them a large reversion of smiles and

sunshine, and it is high time there should be a day of settlement." To all this, we respond a *most hearty AMEN*. But we dissent from the following:

"One obvious and already admitted fact is, that simultaneously with the appointment of county superintendents, commenced the onward improvement of our common schools. During all their previous existence, both under legal regulations, and no regulations at all, these seminaries of the people were little more than opake bodies, equally devoid of inherent and reflected light. Or, to use another figure, they were 'wells without water,' or 'clouds without rain,' to which [dreadful to think of!] nothing less could be reserved than the ~~the~~ *Blackness of darkness forever!* They existed, and this is their only commendation, for they existed only in driveling nonage." After admitting there were *exceptions*, he adds,—"*The mass held only an idiotic visibility, (!) and were alike the infamy of the legislature, and the disgrace of the people.*" "*Such were our com. schools,*" &c.

Now, if such "*were*" the schools, what must have been the teachers? And what a compliment, too, is paid to the intelligence of nineteen-twentieths of the people of this state, who received all their school education in our "*common schools,*" as—they "*were.*" Almost all who have set themselves up as reformers in educational matters, have pursued a similar course: Indeed, many of them have done little else than "*defame the teacher,*" and "*be-nothing*" the schools;—and "*J. R.*" has well said,—"*It is high time there should be a day of settlement.*"—Schools and teachers have been held up to contempt so long, that "*district school teacher,*" has long since become a term of reproach; and many honest, well-meaning people really believe, that teachers are the lowest and most ignorant class of persons to be found in civilized society, and the schools, the veriest sinks of mental and moral pollution. They are continually represented as the merest "*cyphers,*" or, in the aggregate, like "*vulgar fractions multiplied into themselves—yielding a most contemptible product.*" But one quotation more from "J. R." "*Before the appointment of county superintendents, were not the vast preponderance of our common schools as barren as an African desert? where only here and there an oasis contrasts with surrounding desolation.*" Against all such representations of the schools and teachers, I protest:—1. Because they are not true:—2. If true, such a course is unwise and impolitic.

1. *Such representations are not true.* We will take the *fruits* for the proof. New-England and New-York shall be our "*harvest*" field:—1. Because here the "*mass*" of the adult population received all their school education in these same "*seminaries of the people*" as they "*were,*" and which are represented as "*opake bodies*"—which "*held only an idiotic visibility*"—"devoid of inherent or reflected light," &c. 2. Because in this same field, have sprung up and flourished these damnable heresies. 3. Here, too, more than any where else, have we, and our schools been "*defamed and be-nothinged,*"—sneered at, and held up to contempt. Now who does not know, that every department of

society, every pursuit of life, is *honorably* filled with graduates from these "seminaries" as they "*were*"? In the legislature of Massachusetts a few years since, it was ascertained, that a large majority of the members never attended any other than the district schools. And this number included some of the wisest legislators, some of the best men our country has ever produced. But I need not particularize. What sane man does not know, and, (if he is honest,) will not admit, that for the superior intelligence of the people of New-England and New-York, the "common schools" *ought* to receive the credit? But perhaps our 'defamers' (in this state) may say, "Massachusetts has always borne the palm in educational matters, and ought to be excepted." I reply, '*our common schools*' in this state, have produced as much, and as good fruit, in proportion to the time they have been in operation, as Massachusetts. But again, I would remind our 'defamers,' that in Boston, where the excellence of the "common schools" is proverbial, and has been universally acknowledged, wherever, and by all who can appreciate *real merit* the wide world over,—even there, the teachers have been likened to—"Thirty-one Vulgar Fractions multiplied into themselves—yielding a most contemptible product,"—the sc ools, to "*Dormitories*"—the pupils, to—"Hybernating animals," &c. &c.

In making an estimate of the merit, or "inherent light" of the schools as they "*were*," it would not be fair to limit it to those who never attended any other. We claim more. Thousands have obtained the best and most substantial part—the bone and muscle—the *frame-work* of their education in the "common schools," and then attended the academy or high school one or more terms, to be polished and varnished over. Academies and high schools build on our foundation:—they are only our finishing shops. But I trust I have said enough on this point to show that such representations of us and our schools are *unjust*, and a libel upon the intelligence of the people.

I do not wish to be misunderstood. I do not intend to say, the schools or teachers, as they "*were*," have been all they ought, or may be. But this I do say,—the "mass" of teachers of common schools, are men (*and women too*) of more moral and intellectual worth, than can be found in any other profession; and that our schools have possessed vastly more "inherent light" than they have had credit for. No class of men have been more devoted, self-denying, self-sacrificing, than the teachers; or given proofs of a purer genuine philanthropy than they; while none have been more poorly compensated, or more grossly slandered: and those who have done us the greatest injustice, are the men who obtained little or no part of their education in the common schools, but have "*climbed up some other way*." Hence, knowing little or nothing of the schools as they "*were*," or are, they are prone to run into the wildest extremes, and are constantly proposing some impracticable, moonshine theories, which appear well no where else but on paper.

2. *Such a course is unwise.* As I have already anticipated much that I wished to say on this

point, I shall add but little. Any candid man can see at once, such a course as has been pursued by many reformers, is calculated to degrade the teacher, lower him, his profession and his school in the estimation of community; and consequently, destroys confidence in teachers and schools, and necessarily greatly abridges their usefulness. But it does mischief in more ways than one. It induces many good teachers to leave our profession, on account of the odium attached to it, to seek some more "*honorable*" one; and prevents many others from entering it for the same reason. But I cannot dwell on this, as I wish to speak on one other point; and as this article is already longer than I intended it should be when I commenced, I will defer what I have to say on that point until next month.

E. P. FREEMAN.

West Troy, April, 1846.

[For the District School Journal.]

MR. EDITOR—I send you the enclosed circular, stating the object and plan of the N. Y. State Juvenile Temperance Association, hoping that its publication, or so much as you please, will be of service not only to the interests of temperance, but to the general interests of education. During the last year, I have travelled through several counties in the western part of the state, and have visited many of the schools in the country towns, in several large villages, such as Geneva, Auburn, Syracuse and Oswego, and in the cities of Troy and Brooklyn. I have also met with quite a number of the county and town superintendents, and it gives me great pleasure to say that I have been very much pleased with the general operation of the "school system." The kindness and courtesy with which I have been uniformly received, is entitled to a grateful acknowledgment, while the skill and faithfulness generally exhibited by the teachers, both male and female, have won my respect.—Under the operation of such a system, carried out by such agents, great and permanent good must be the inevitable result.

I can not forbear a word about the school houses. In the villages, where two or three districts unite, as many have done, to form a union school, a commendable zeal is exhibited to erect a good house, and "verily they have their reward." I have been astonished at the manifest advantages of a GOOD SCHOOL HOUSE. When I see the improvements made in all the implements of husbandry and manufactures, the comforts and conveniences sought and found in the arrangement of dwelling houses, churches, in stores, factories, and even in barns, I can only say, when will all the *school houses* be what they should be! On this point I have two images before my eye. The one is that of several school houses in Syracuse; large rooms, high studded, well ventilated, elegantly finished and furnished, clean almost as a parlor, and with one hundred and fifty children in one room, yet the air pure as the mountain breeze; happiness and health on every face. The other image is that of a small, low, dirty hut, dropped down in a morass, with water almost to the sills in any time, eighty or one hundred children of all ages packed in so close that I had to step over the little ones, to

cross the room—boys crawling under the master's desk to get to their seats—and the air so thick, I could almost squeeze it in the hand like a sponge. I will not name its location, but can assure you there are many others almost as bad.

With many wishes for the prosperity of the New-York district schools, I am very respectfully,

CHARLES J. WARREN,
Sec. N. Y. S. Juv. Temp. Ass.

OBJECT AND PLAN OF THE N. YORK STATE JUVENILE TEMPERANCE ASSOCIATION.

This association was formed in May, 1845. Hon. R. HYDE WALWORTH, Chancellor of the State, is President; Rev. C. J. Warren, Secretary and General Agent.

The object is to enrol, in one uniform Temperance phalanx, the entire youth of the empire state, and so to instruct them, and furnish them with means and motives, that they may act intelligently and efficiently as the friends and supporters of temperance in future life.

This great object cannot be gained, but by strenuous and persevering exertions; and to give the necessary unity and efficiency to efforts for its attainment, the secretary has been engaged to devote himself entirely to the work. As soon as possible he will visit each of the counties, to enrol and instruct the youth, and form local associations. Before, however, his personal influence could be felt in all the 11,000 school districts, a large part of the present youth will have passed into active life. In this emergency, attention has been directed to the schools, and the following is the proposed

PLAN OF ACTION.

I. That the county and town or city superintendents recommend the introduction of this movement into the schools, so far as it will not interfere with the regular duties of the school.

II. That the teacher of each school have a book, in which may be alphabetically recorded the names of those scholars, who shall, with the consent of their parents, sign the pledge.

III. That this book be kept in the school, as the permanent temperance registry for the district.

IV. That a number of the scholars be appointed, each month, as recruiters, to keep the pledge in constant circulation, for the names of both adults and youth. Adult persons, thus obtained, and the youth, when they pass over the age of sixteen, are to be considered honorary members, and their names may be thus distinguished by the letters H. M.

V. That there be a monthly meeting in each school, at such times as will not interrupt the duties of the school, when the names obtained during the month may be reported and enrolled. The youth may engage in singing, dialogues and speeches, original and selected, and an address may be delivered by the teacher, or some other person, appointed for the purpose.

A CIRCULAR, embracing the substance of the above plan, has been addressed to all the county and town superintendents of com. schools, soliciting their co-operation, and that of teachers generally. The convention of superintendents, teachers, &c., in Allegany county, Sept. 18th,

recommended "the formation of juvenile temperance societies in the schools, upon the plan proposed by the New-York State Juvenile Temperance Association."

Resolutions, approving the enterprise, as tending happily to complete and secure the triumph of the temperance reformation, and recommending it to the confidence and pecuniary support of the christian public, have been passed unanimously by the Synods of Geneva, and of Genesee, and by the State Temperance Convention at Rochester, composed of 212 delegates from 26 counties. Approving letters have also been received from Ex. Gov. BOUCK, Chief Justice BRONSON, Hon. THEODORE FRELINGHUYSEN, Rev. S. H. TYNG, D. D., FR. DWIGHT, Esq. late Editor of the Common School Journal, E. C. DELAVAN, Esq., HENRY DWIGHT, Esq., and many others.

South Hartford, Feb. 20, 1846.

S. S. RANDALL, Esq.—

SIR—I have just finished the second perusal of the able report of the present State Superintendent of Common Schools; a document always looked for by me with interest, and which, on the present occasion is highly gratifying to the friends of our common school system. The superintendent in endeavoring to reconcile in part the discrepancies between the town superintendents' and marshals' returns, has not only failed, but has thus publicly shown that there is a culpable negligence somewhere on the part of public officers. It appears strange to me that the town superintendents should commit so great an oversight, (as per this report,) after the significant caution conveyed upon the blank. The marshals' returns may be defective, from what probably is a fact, that they did not actually inquire "at every dwelling or of the head of the family residing therein." One of these gentlemen told me, not long since, that "he was the fittest person for that office that lived in his town, for the reason that he knew more of every man's business than any other man in the town, and of course, could perform much of the business of the office without travel, and without making all the specified inquiries." If such were the necessary qualifications, it is presumed that every town could furnish at least one acceptable candidate, for tradition saith that "from primitive times even until now, there have been busy bodies in other men's matters." Wise men, too, have been known to give the proverb, that "guess work is the best work of any, sometimes;" and if these gentlemen believe in traditions, and follow wise sayings, they have not "so greatly erred" after all; their conclusions may be, mathematically speaking, approximations to the true results.

In the enumeration of children, I apprehend that trustees are many times censurable; they are anxious, and justly so, to count every child between the required ages. Now there are in almost every town some small backward schools that give employment to ill-qualified teachers, because they are cheap; and the more wealthy children belonging to these schools are often sent away to the village school; and the consequence is, they are enumerated both in their own district and at the place of their temporary residence.

A former superintendent of this town made some inquiries into this matter, and found in some instances, three, four and five names attached to reports from [wealthy districts that had no natural right there. And again, many of our

school districts have no well defined boundaries. Some towns have none at all upon their records, and in others they are so vague, and there have been so many divisions and subdivisions of farms, new settlements made on non-resident lands, since they were even thus vaguely established, that the information to be derived from them, is anything but conclusive. Thus for instance, a family having five children to draw public money, and living half a mile from one school house, and three-fourths from another, was counted for years in both districts; another family of three children as above, living not more than one mile and a quarter from any one of three school-houses, was claimed in each of the three districts. If it were necessary, like examples might be multiplied to any extent. These items may serve to explain in part, the discrepancies in the returns of the two sets of officers. I do not wish to find fault with trustees. They, as a class, no doubt, endeavor to perform their duties faithfully, burdensome as they are; but so far as I have been able to collect information, they are many times quite too careless in making their annual reports. It is a fact that reports are made in full without an abstract from the teachers' check-roll, while library moneys remain on hand; and to ascertain the amount of receipts and expenditures, the town clerk's record of the apportionment is called in requisition. Of twenty-three reports received by the aforesaid superintendent, all were returned for correction but two. I think trustees should be peremptorily required to present their reports before the fifteenth day of January, or say, the first of February; as now practised, they are, many of them, withheld until near the time at which the apportionment must be made; giving the superintendent very little or no time at all, for their critical examination. I was highly gratified in reading that portion of Mr. Benton's report relating to libraries, and I hope three things; First, That the catalogue spoken of, contains the titles of *all* the books in *all* the school libraries in the State, (none dodged.) Second, That the catalogue be published and widely circulated. Third, That you, through the School Journal or some other channel, give the public your full and frank opinion, as to the fitness of those books. If the books are all of a suitable character, it is evident those selecting them did not exclusively follow the instructions of the department. A town superintendent informed me that he, with the county superintendent examined the libraries of his town, and found only two exceptionable books: "Combe on the Constitution of Man," and "Life of Stephen Burroughs." The first named, on account of its infidel tendency, was reserved as a subject for deliberation. The second was acknowledged to contain passages of a decidedly immoral and licentious tendency; yet they were supposed to be facts, and it was restored to the library from the fact that the Bible, that long venerated and purest of books, was charged with containing like indecent facts. Now, sir, these are good moral citizens, church-going men; but I hope my children, if I have any, may not be benefitted by a second edition of their criticisms. Circumstances like this may account for some names that appear on that catalogue. Our county and state superintendents are prone, I sometimes think, in making their reports, to roam in the regions of fancy. That a great improvement has been made in the condition of our common schools I do not doubt; indeed I am well informed of that fact; but of the overwhelming progress sometimes intimated, the people wait for the evidence. Many faithful officers there are, and to their honor

be it spoken, but our towns do not always select the best men to superintend the education of our children; and I think more caution will be used in the choice of candidates, if the suggestion of the state superintendent respecting their biennial (*I would say triennial*) election, is adopted. I have been really astonished at the want of interest some school officers manifest. As an instance, one of these gentlemen at the annual meeting of superintendents, was forward to every good work. Seeing him some months after, I of course enquired how he got along. "Why," said he, "after the old sort; I take it easy. Not worth while to undertake anything out of the usual course of things." And you, sir, may imagine my disappointment at being thus answered. Another was for raising the standard of qualifications among teachers, and for licensing none not qualified; and soon after licensed a man who said "he was always particular to teach his scholars to close all questions in reading with the rising inflection," and did not know why tropics and polar circles were drawn on maps at a particular latitude; and when informed, expressed his utter astonishment at the simple reason; and in giving an analysis of that inimitable song, "The Burial of Sir John Moore," where "we laid him down, from the field of his fame, fresh and gory," he supposed the *field* to be a narrow, triangular field, similar in shape to a "goring piece" of cloth put by ladies in their garments, "in times of old and scarcity," before the rage for bishops and bustles. Now, sir, I am admonished that this letter is drawn out to a tedious length, and I might multiply such facts as the foregoing, but these are sufficient, and you are undoubtedly ready to set me down as a complete fault-finder. Not so, however. There is a bright side to this picture, which I may endeavor to exhibit at some future time. Underneath the flowers that lie along the path of the school officer are some hidden thorns. The fact cannot be denied that a large majority of the people in this region are opposed in practice, if not in theory, to the present common school system. We may hope it is not always to be thus. The writer hailed the passage of the law of eighteen hundred and forty-three with joy, and was selected to carry it into execution in this town. His services were not long required, for the reason, as is supposed, and perhaps with some propriety, that his mind was too intensely fixed upon the great objects had in view by the legislators. But let that pass. Time and perseverance will overcome all obstacles, and I can but hope the period may arrive when all will perceive the utility and economy of the system as understood by its founders.

Perhaps I owe an apology for indicting this letter upon you. I have written without much order, and probably of much that is of but little interest to you. The intellectual and moral improvement of the race, has been a cherished theme with me from early boyhood, and I have habituated myself to look upon half measures, or rather principles but half carried out, with perfect disgust. Thus I have written plainly—written as I would talk, and as I have talked with you in years past. I do not wish any part of this to be published. It is not worthy of that distinction; but it may be the means of suggesting some favorable ideas to your mind which I would gladly peruse in the Journal. If not, deprive it of existence forthwith. I am well pleased with the course you intend to pursue with that paper. We can well dispense with some local matters that have heretofore appeared in its columns. My subscription does not run out till

the close of the volume, but I have missed the February number. Please forward it. I may not subscribe for the coming year; should not have done so heretofore, but from the fact, as I supposed, that the paper needed patronage. I have been a subscriber from its commencement at Geneva, by the lamented Dwight; and have taken those sent to this school district, and they are now before me in the library, bound in good style. Only one or two others in this town have done so. There's find fault again; so sign off—

Yours, with great respect,

WYOMING COUNTY.

Extracts from the proceedings of the Wyoming County Teachers' Association.

The Wyoming County Teachers' Association met pursuant to adjournment at the Court House, in the village of Warsaw, on Saturday, February 1, at 10 o'clock, A. M. The meeting was called to order by the President. The record of proceedings of the last meeting were read and accepted. The reading of the Constitution was then called for, after which a number of names were added to the call of the resolution. Mr. DENMAN the County Superintendent, then rose and offered the following resolution:

Resolved, That in the death of FRANCIS DWIGHT, Esq., the late able editor of the District School Journal, the cause of popular education has sustained a great and permanent loss, and that we deeply regret the afflictive dispensation of Divine Providence, which has deprived us of his efficient aid and counsel.

Resolved, That we tender our sympathies to the family and friends of the deceased, in this their great affliction, but rejoice with them that they mourn not as for one "who hath not hope in his death."

Resolved, That a copy of the proceedings be sent to the widow of the deceased.

Mr. DENMAN remarked, that he had had the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with the deceased, and knew him to be a gentleman, a scholar and a devoted philanthropist. He sought to serve his Creator in efforts to meliorate the condition of the human family, and with this object in view, knowing that the impressions of youth give character to the man, enlisted in the cause of popular education, in which he continued to labor until the time of his death, with a zeal and perseverance seldom known. No opposition was sufficient to cause him to deviate from the fixed purpose of his heart, which was the improvement of his race; no obstacle was too great for him to overcome. He accomplished much, and the rising generation after generations yet to come, when they contemplate the labors which he performed in their behalf, and the results which he was an active agent in producing, will speak his name with reverence and cherish his memory with delight. I rise not to pronounce a eulogy on the deceased. He needs no eulogy. His name is enrolled on the book of fame, and his memory is engraved on the hearts of thousands. When humanity and philanthropy shall cease to exist, then and not till then will his name be forgotten.

The resolutions were unanimously adopted.

Ms. EDITOR:—I am much pleased with the papers which I have received from you. Accept my thanks for them, and something a little more substantial, which accompanies the letter. I have no doubt your paper is doing much towards elevating the schools of your state. We need something of the kind in the peninsula state, but must get along

without, I suppose, for a while. Perhaps you would like to know something of the primary schools in this part of our common country. I will endeavor to give you a little idea of our present condition and future prospects. But first perhaps some account of the past may be necessary. Four years ago the present spring, I came into the country. The schools were in a sad condition, the people were indifferent, the teachers were indifferent, and as a natural consequence the pupils were indifferent also. The people were many of them in debt and harassed by their creditors. Gradually, however, their debts have disappeared and are receding, and an improved state of feeling is taking the place of the apathy which prevailed. The true yankee spirit is beginning to manifest itself, and Michigan may, in my estimation, look forward to the day when she can boast as good a system of primary schools, and as well provided, as any of her sister states.

One reason why our schools have not been better is, we have lacked a sufficiency of good teachers. Another is, the compensation has been so small, that men qualified for the situation and its responsibilities, could find employment in other parts which suited their tastes better; and even at the present time good teachers are not to be had. Inspectors are under the (to many of them) painful necessity of granting certificates to men illy qualified, for the sole reason that others are not to be found to supply their places.

Another great impediment has been the great variety of books to be found in nearly all our schools—occasioned by people coming from different parts of the world, bringing their books with them, and continuing to use them. When I came into the school I am now engaged in teaching, I found six or eight different kinds of reading books, eight different kinds of arithmetics, two kinds of grammar and four kinds of spelling books. However, upon representing to the inhabitants the utter impossibility of doing justice to the scholars under such circumstances, I have succeeded in establishing a uniformity with which all are well pleased. The method which we adopted in establishing our uniformity, was calling a meeting of the inhabitants, who appointed a committee to examine books. Upon the reception of the report, it was adopted unanimously!

I think the same method, if properly carried out, would work like a charm any where where a better is not in operation. The present selection is expected to stand until the district at a meeting alters it, thereby preventing useless and hurtful innovations. I have taken some pains to exhibit specimens of your paper, and have succeeded in obtaining a fellow teacher as a subscriber. Accompanying this is his payment, fifty cents. But I must close, as it is getting dark.

Fraternally yours,
M. R. HATHAWAY.

Wayne, Mich.

Miscellaneous.

[From Chambers' Edinburgh Journal.]
THE MINDS OF CHILDREN.

I know nothing more intensely interesting or at the same time more affecting, than the minds of children. In a great measure, they are a sealed-up mystery, and must remain so, because at their most interesting stage the child has neither power nor language to record their operations, and, when that record could be made, the peculiar character has long since disappeared, or become so entirely mixed up with

other things, as to have no longer individuality or identity. Perhaps, of all minds that have revealed themselves to us intimately on paper, none ever retained more of the simplicity and singleness of feeling peculiar to childhood, than Charles Lamb and his inimitable sister. Going back, as it were, into the early history of their own minds, and putting off at every step the habitudes, notions, and feelings of mature life, they became again little children, while they wrote down those beautiful histories contained in "Mrs. Leicester's School." We find there no condescension of intellect; no unnatural simplifying of language; no science written in monosyllables; nothing, in short, which, while parents pronounce it excellent, children reject—and, after all, children are invariably the best judges of children's books; but all natural, simple, true, and while we read them, recollections of our own earliest feelings come back; we get glimpses, as it were, into that far off land, from which time, care, sorrow, and, perhaps, error, seemed to have removed us forever. I know men who cannot read those little histories without tears, less from any affecting narrative they may contain, than because they recall, in all its touching simplicity the unworldly and tender spirit of their own childhood.

But from these excellent little books, let us turn to little children themselves; and, first, it is of early infancy that I will say a few words. Many people maintain that little children are all alike; these have very little knowledge of the subject, or very little observation. Setting entirely aside the circumstances of dress—for a child in a daintily embroidered cap, and a robe which cost two or three guineas, must of necessity look very different to the one in a coarser cotton gown—there are important differences in the aspects of children, which it will be our pleasure to trace.

There are some delicate, pale, and dark-eyed infants, with dark long eye lashes, that have a certain pensive and sentimental air, altogether unlike the expression of such young life. One could fancy, that, if they knew our language, they would relate some sweet but melancholy history of pre-existence; or that they brooded with sad apprehension on the future, which they mournfully contrasted with former happiness passed away for ever. Such an expression, though by no means common, is wonderfully touching.

There is another, and the most painful expression of all, which belongs to the children of the miserably poor. It conveys the idea of a mind prematurely developed, as if while yet but a few months old, they had lived so much in the atmosphere of hard thrift and misery, as to have become care-worn, anxious, and depressed; as if they had already passed through the withering experience of a life. One feels as if their hearts were locked-up in fountains of misery, and as if their feeble speechlessness were only an aggravation of their misery. They have the look of patient victims; of creatures subdued down to the pitch of misery, by— one shudders to think what process. God help such, for the compassion of man can avail them little!

How different from such children is the merry, arch, graceless, sunburnt little imp that hangs laughing at the gypsy's back! You see at a glance that it is a little animal all over; that it has no premature development of mind; that it desires neither your sympathy nor your pity; that it overflows with exuberant health; is strong-limbed and rosy-cheeked, and wants for nothing. It lies in its mother's arms, or hangs at her back, staring about with its wild black eyes at the green boughs under which they travel, or mimicking the birds that sing in them, with its pleasant, shrill, little voice. It is a creature which will never be troubled with sensibilities, that possesses in itself all that will suffice for its wants; and only to see it, is to have a joyous feeling.

But whatever the child may be, if we study it attentively, we shall be aware of the mind at work; and in this there always appears to me something intensely interesting, as well as affecting. How earnestly will a child fix its eyes upon an object, evidently absorbing its little faculties by an examination, "taking in knowledge at an entrance;" then with a satisfied air, as if it thought it knew all about it, turning to some new object! The process, however, must be long, and many times repeated, before ideas connect themselves with things, before recognition can be made, comparisons drawn, or knowledge can correct itself; yet of all this process how little we know! Children often seem to say very absurd things, for which they are ridiculed or abashed; nothing, however, can be more cruel than this, for the child has merely done what many a philosopher has done before him—jumped to a wrong conclusion; and if, instead of being ridiculed, and made to distrust himself, and avoid the venturing his little speculations before us in future, we had been at the trouble of carefully examining his notions, we should have discovered how naturally, perhaps, the idea had arisen, or how ingeniously the little mind had put together incongruous things. I remember, when a very young child, asserting that there was a great lion on a hill opposite our house. The thing was declared impossible, ridiculous; and after my vainly endeavoring to establish the fact on the evidence of having seen it every day, I was held altogether as a foolish child. I remember very well the mortification I felt; especially as, to my senses, the lion still remained there, although I carefully avoided mentioning it. Before long, however, I must have forgotten all about it, for I remember, also, that, instead of the lion which used to stand on the hill, I saw afterwards two dark fir-trees, sufficiently near for the heads to form one mass, but with their stems considerably apart. I wondered how it was that I had never seen them before; but the fact was, I had formerly imagined them to be a lion, but in the interval had become sufficiently acquainted with the distant outline of trees to recognise them for what they were.

Who, too, that has any knowledge of young children, has not seen them sink into a profound reverie, the eye unemployed, and the whole mind introverted—evidently cogitating, in what is familiarly called a brown study? Sometimes a laugh and a start terminate this reverie, as if

a pleasant thought had occupied the mind, and the result had been altogether satisfactory. At other times, a long sigh, and a look of vague and often painful wonder, which brings the little wanderer back. What has been the idea in this case? Perhaps some shadowing sentiment of sorrow or apprehension. Many an infant Jesus is represented in this state of abstraction, with that gentle, thoughtful expression of countenance, which suits so well with the childhood of him who was expressly the man of sorrow. But it is the mysterious fore-knowledge or anticipation of grief which makes the mind of a child so peculiarly affecting. Do we inherit it from a long life of suffering and sorrowful ancestors, or is it part of the original mind of man? I think it is, inasmuch as sorrow is the condition of humanity; and although thorns and thistles might not grow in the garden of Eden, their seeds were in the earth which was our destined home, ready to spring up to a plentiful growth the moment man set his foot out of Paradise.

Let me now close this paper with the true account of a little girl's first knowledge of death. Mary was about four years old, and her brother Charles was in his third year. A more lovely pair of children never blessed the eyes of the same mother, yet never did two present a greater contrast. They were both remarkably fair, with sunny locks and blue eyes, but the girl was more delicately formed. The little frame possessed the most perfect symmetry and buoyant activity; yet the suns of summer, or the keen winds of winter, failed to summon into her pale but vivacious countenance more than a momentary glow. Her brother was the very personification of strong, boyish health, beauty, and humor. He was broad and robust, and his face was a round exhibition of merry eyes, plump ruddy cheeks, and a wide row of white teeth, that were ever and anon displayed by the most cordial laughter.

The parents watched the growth of the girl with trembling—for their boy they feared nothing; he appeared made to weather all the storms of humanity. In this respect they were doomed to endure bitter disappointment. An illness, as violent as it was unlooked for, carried him to the grave in a few days. Dearly as Mary loved her brother, and quick as was her perception, yet when he lay moaning on his mother's knee, and her father, as he hung over him in inexpressible anguish, said, "Are you not sorry for poor Charles, now he is so ill?" she, who had no experience of death, only replied, by an earnest assurance that he would soon be better. But when her weeping parents said to her, "Mary, you have no longer a brother; dear Charles is dead!" and taking each a hand, led her to where the little corpse was laid, upon the bed they had so often nestled in together, it was a beautiful and a touching sight to see the unaffected workings of her pure, unpractised heart. Without any symptom of surprise or alarm at the change, which before she could not comprehend, she took his little cold hand, said, "Charles," in a tone of most touching tenderness, and laying her head mutely on his bosom, burst into tears.

A beautiful sight it was to behold her thought-

ful and innocent countenance, and to see how, in full and perfect faith, she drank in all her father told her as he said, "My darling, you must not think that little lifeless form is Charles; it is only a part of him. We all have a soul as well as a body. The soul is that within us which *thinks*, and *speaks*, and *loves*. It only inhabits the body, as we inhabit a house for a time. When the soul departs, the body dies, that is, becomes lifeless and cold, and is buried in the earth, and becomes dust; but the soul cannot die. It passes, if it has been good, into a world of souls. This world, pleasant as it is, even in the pleasantest time of summer, is not to be compared with that beautiful world. There all are spirits, good, beautiful, loving, and happy beyond expression. There dear Charlie is gone, and there too in a little while we shall join him!" Then leading her away, her affectionate parents sat down to talk to her, and to comfort themselves, by relating in a simple style, all the instances of the death of children so beautifully recorded in the Scriptures. Let no one think this would be lost on a child of four years old.

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